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ABSTRACT

This paper connects the philosophical basis of Glasser's Choice Theory/Reality Therapy to the Functional Assessments of Behavior (FAB) required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA states that before a school can place a student with emotional or behavioral difficulties into an alternative program for discipline reasons, it must conduct a FAB and implement a behavior intervention plan in an attempt to alleviate the behavioral issue. A FAB is also an integral part of a manifestation determination for severe problems related to weapons and drugs in the school setting. However, IDEA offers little guidance about how to conduct a FAB. Various working definitions suggest that a FAB should determine the function that the problem behavior serves for the student, describe the undesirable behavior and the circumstances of its occurrence and nonoccurrence, and define reinforcers that maintain the behavior. Glasser's choice theory, also known as control theory, posits that humans have five basic needs and that all behavior is undertaken to meet or satisfy these needs. Five elements of a FAB (need for philosophical orientation, description of child's behavior, precipitating factors, hypothesis for explanation, and identifying variables for change) are correlated with five elements of choice theory (choice theory itself, total behavior system, external environment, identifying the unmet need, and developing a plan). (SV)

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CORRELATING GLASSER'S CHOICE THEORY TO THE BEHAVIORAL REQUIREMENTS OF IDEA 97

The purpose of the paper is to connect the philosophical underpinnings of Glasser's Choice Theory/Reality Therapy to the IDEA requirement of Functional Assessments of Behavior. The goal of this connection is to provide a theoretic and philosophic basis upon which to conduct such assessments.

To accomplish the above stated goal three areas must be addressed:

1. Why are Functional Assessments necessary?
2. What is a Functional Assessment?
3. What is Glasser's Choice Theory?

The final consideration of this paper will be to demonstrate the connection between Glasser's theories and the needs/requirements of a Functional Assessment.

Why are Functional Assessments of Behavior (FAB) necessary?

As a general practice FAB's have been in educational and psychological literature for many years in one form or another. Functional Assessments have been at the root of many theories and practices for modifying maladaptive behavior. However, since 1997 FAB has taken on a new dimension by being required in the Reauthorization Bill of IDEA 1997.

Functional Assessments appear to be at the heart of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for children with Emotional and/or Behavioral difficulties. It would appear to the casual observer that the crafter of this series of laws believes that it would be very difficult to meet the conditions of FAPE without some form of a FAB. Elements of this requirement appear throughout the entire EEP process as well as in discussion regarding FAPE.

Functional Assessments along with Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) are mentioned specifically in Section 615(k)(1) of the reauthorization bill. This particular section states that before a school system can change an eligible student's current program to an alternative program for discipline reason a FAB must be conducted and a BIP must be implemented in an attempt to alleviate the behavioral issues. In addition, a FAB is an integral part of a Manifestation Determination for severe problems relating to dangerous weapons and drugs in the school setting.

While specific mention of the FAB's and BIP's in Section 615(k)(1) appears to be the first mention of these activities they are implied in other portions of the law.

OSEP GUIDANCE

Section 614(d)(2)(B) requires the EEP team in the case of a child whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, (to) consider, when appropriate, strategies, including positive

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behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address that behavior. In addition, school districts should take prompt steps to address misconduct when it first appears. Such steps could, in many instances, eliminate the need for more drastic program (IEP) and placement processes required by IDEA.

Section 614(d)(1)(B) of IDEA specifies who must participate in a FAB. Generally speaking those included are the members of an IEP team and other personnel who possesses a working knowledge of the student's behavior as a result of regular or frequent contact with the student. In other words, anyone who has frequent contact with the student and can offer relevant information must be part of this assessment. Specifically, Section 614(d)(1)(B) requires the following members for an IEP Team:

A. The parents of the student with a disability.
B. At least on regular education teacher, if the student is participating:
C. At least one special education teacher, or where appropriate, at least on special education provider of the student.
D. A representative of the LEA who:
    1. Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities.
    2. Is knowledgeable about curriculum
    3. Is knowledgeable about the availability of the resources of the LEA
E. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of assessment results, who may be a member of a team described in clauses A through E.
F. At the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student, including related services personnel as appropriate
G. Whenever appropriate, the student with the disability.

All of the above combine to firmly establish in the IEP process with the intention of specifically impacting student outcomes and programming

What is a Functional Assessment of Behavior?

While IDEA is very specific about the fact that FAB's should occur, who should participate and the reason for conducting such activity, it offers little or no guidance as to how to actually conduct the FAB itself. Regulations, as of this writing, have not caught up with the law as yet. Once the regulations catch up, then the issue will have more clarity. In the meantime, there are many differing views as to just exactly what a FAB is and/or should be. In an attempt to provide guidance on the issue of what a Functional Assessment actually is, Nelson et al., paraphrased Dunlap in the following:

> The goal of functional behavioral assessment is to identify relationships between personal and/or environmental events and the occurrence and nonoccurrence of a target behavior. (Dunlap et al., 1993)

This definition clearly suggests that behavior is the result of some other environmental force heretofore not typically associated with the behavior. It should be noted that previous attempts to modify behavior have been focused on changing the external controlling force such as reward or punishment schedules. This subtle departure from external management of social factors to connecting the behavior to other "events" changes the focus of the process.

> Functional behavioral assessment is designed to (a) promote hypothesis-driven treatment, (b) place more emphasis on skill building rather than punishment, (c) increase the prospect of a positive treatment outcome, (d) increase the chance of maintenance and generalization of treatment effects, and (e) contribute to the scientific advancement of treatment efforts (Blakslee, Sugai, & Gruba, 1994)

The working explanation employed by the State of Michigan takes a similar, but slightly broader, interpretation:

> In assessing the nature of problematic behavior exhibited by the student, the staff will need to determine what function this behavior serves for this student. In other words, how does this student benefit from engaging in this problematic behavior? In some instances, the behavior may be a result of a physical or medical condition that may serve as the primary reason in which the student is engaged in the behavior. In some situations, the student may engage in this behavior as a result of an environmental variable (i.e., the time of day, the assigned staff or the scheduled activity). And, in most situations the student may engage in the behavior due to the potential reinforcing quality of the behavior. The student has learned that this behavior serves to provide a level of reinforcement that the student finds pleasurable (page 10 of Technical Assistance Document).

According to O'Neill et al (1990) a functional analysis is complete when three main outcomes have been accomplished:

1. Description of the undesirable behavior(s), operationally
2. Prediction of the times and situations when the undesirable behavior(s) will not be performed across the full range of typical daily routines; and
3. Definition of the function(s), e.g. maintaining reinforcers, that the undesirable behavior(s) produce for the individual. While the above is not the definitive discussion of the definition of a functional assessment the reader can see several common themes running through the presentation. These themes can be the basis for understanding what is required of a Functional Assessment of Behavior. Among those themes are:

   A. The need for a philosophical orientation upon which to interpret a child's behavior
   B. Description of the child's behavior including:
      1. The frequency of occurrence
      2. The location & time of day of the occurrence
      3. The seventy of the occurrence
      4. Precipitating factors
   C. The development of a hypothesis to explain the behavior which would include:
      1. What the apparent reinforcers, are for the student when this behavior occurs that keeps the student returning to the behavior.
      2. Identifying the variables that may need to be changed in order to produce a positive change in the student.

Moving to the next level of application these themes comprise the blueprint for action by the IEP Team. Logistically completion of the functional assessment can be a complicated and complex series of tasks. A complete discussion of this task is outside of the parameter of this paper. However, placing these themes in the context of a theoretical and philosophical framework is well within these parameters.

Before any discussion of linking functional assessments to a framework, a theoretical foundation for that framework must be built.

The Basic Elements Of Glasser's Choice Theory

Obviously, within the confines of this paper, the entire body of what makes up Glasser's ***Choice Theory*** cannot be covered. However, the basic elements of ***Choice Theory*** can be explained in sufficient detail so as to give the reader a cursory knowledge of the concepts and how they might be applied to Functional Assessments of Behavior.

Choice Theory has evolved over the 30+ years following the career of Dr. William Glasser and his published works. Historically, several premises have been at the very heart of these works, which are currently, titled *Choice Theory*. These premises follow a progressive line of thought as follows:

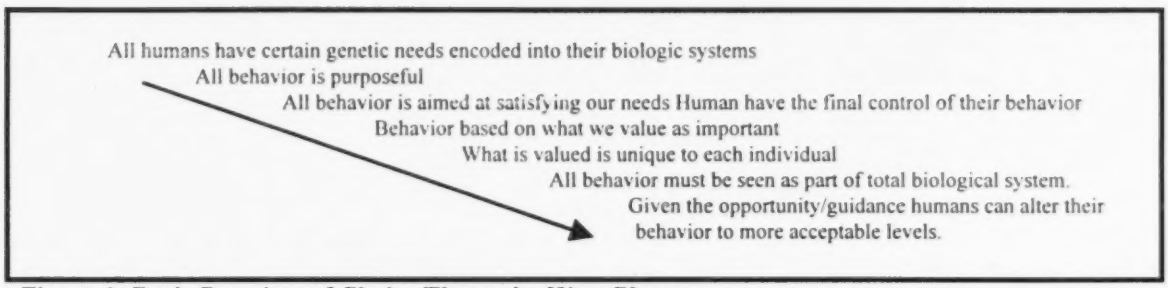
All humans have certain genetic needs encoded into their biologic systems
All behavior is purposeful
All behavior is aimed at satisfying our needs Human have the final control of their behavior
Behavior based on what we value as important
What is valued is unique to each individual
All behavior must be seen as part of total biological system.
Given the opportunity/guidance humans can alter their behavior to more acceptable levels.

Figure 1: Basic Premises of Choice Theory by Wm. Glasser

According to *Choice Theory* there are five (5) basic needs that are genetically programmed into every human being. Those five needs are:

- **Belonging:** The need for love and social connectedness. This is the need to be a part of some type of group or relationship.
- **Power:** The need for achieving some type control of over our lives. This could be accomplished by competing, achieving a high degree of quality in our work or gaining some level of importance in our lives.
- **Freedom:** The need to make our own choices, to move about, to pursue what interests us.
- **Fun:** The need for simple joy received in playing, learning creating, or finding solutions.
- **Survival:** The need to satisfy physiological needs to maintain life (e.g. food, water, reproduction, etc.)

Figure 2: The Five Basic Needs

All behavior is undertaken in an attempt to meet or satisfy one or more of the five basic needs listed Figure 2. All human beings go through a process whereby they compare what they want or which Basic Need must satisfied with what they currently have. Glasser describes the internal pictures that human have for getting their needs met as our **"Quality World Pictures".** Pictures in the Quality World are the representations of what it takes to meet our needs. As such, these pictures are highly individualized and/or unique. For example, one person may see the ideal family as being similar to the classic TV family of "Ozzie & Harriet" with little or no conflict and life moving on in a smooth seamless fashion. Another person may view the ideal family similar to the one represented by the TV family of

"Roseanne" which was filled with conflict, confrontation and a series of disjointed ups and downs. Either of these pictures can be Needs satisfying for the individual because it is their unique picture.

As humans attempt to satisfy their needs they go through a comparing process where they take in information from the surrounding world and compare it with their "Quality World Picture". If the incoming information compares favorably, the Quality World Picture is reinforced. A creative system "kicks into gear" in an effort to generate behaviors that maintain this state of equilibrium. The resulting behavior will be consistent with the surroundings and of a positive nature. This positive comparison will result in the person continuing to engage in those behaviors, which continue to reinforce that Quality Picture.

On the other hand if the comparison of incoming information is out of sync with the Quality World Picture then the person comes into conflict with themselves and eventually their surroundings. The creative system "kicks into gear" in an effort to find a reconciliation behavior, which will bring the Quality World Picture, back into harmony. Initially the creative system may initiate a series of behaviors, which may, only in the short run, satisfy a need. As long as the need is satisfied the behavior will continue even though the behavior may be detrimental to the individual. As an example, depression can be an appropriate means to satisfying the need for belonging. When people are exhibiting symptoms of depression it, initially, evokes sympathy and nurturing from those around the individual, thereby meeting the need for belonging. However, allowed to continue the depression takes on a negative if not debilitating quality causing the sympathy and nurturing to stop. The result is the continued state of disharmony in the individual because a need is not being satisfied. Subsequently, the individual may choose deeper levels of depression in an attempt to gain acceptance and fulfill the need for Belonging. The behavior escalates, throwing the person further out of harmony with their surrounding world and their Quality World Picture. This state of disharmony will continue until the creative system changes the behavior to something more effective/efficient

In either the positive or the negative case the resulting behavior is always manifested as a composite behavior. This composite consists of four elements, which are present in all behavior: Feelings, Physiology, Thinking, and Acting. These four elements comprise what is known as **Total Behavior** . All behavior consists of all four elements, all of the time. One element may present itself as slightly stronger than the others at any given time, but all four are present, nevertheless.

In the frame work of *Choice Theory* the Total Behavior of an individual is the result of a relatively conscious decision on the part of the individual. The individual may not have control over which needs must be satisfied but they can exert control over how those needs can be met. In cases where the Total Behavior is totally out of sync with the surrounding environment the individual may need assistance in; identifying the need they are trying to meet, in examining the Total Behavioral System as it is operating, and evaluating the success or failure of those behaviors. Once aware of what is happening the individual is assisted in making plans (tapping the Creative System) which will lead to a more appropriate satisfying of the need.

The Interplay Between Choice Theory and Functional Assessments of Behavior

To this point the critical elements of a FAB have been discussed and defined along with a basic discussion of Glasser's *Choice Theory*. The stated goal of this paper was to demonstrate how *Choice Theory* could play a critical role in conducting a FAB. The interaction between the elements of Choice Theory and FAB's is reciprocal in as much as they can be interchangeable parts, hence the two (2) way arrow in Figure 3 below.

Elements of FAB		Elements of Choice Theory
Need for Philosophical Orientation	⟷	Choice Theory itself
Description of Child's Behavior	⟷	Total Behavior System
Precipitating Factors	⟷	What is the External Environment
Hypothesis for explanation	⟷	Identifying which need is to be satisfied
Identifying Variables for change	⟷	Developing a Plan

Figure 3: The Interaction of Components

Need for Philosophical Orientation = Choice Theory

As indicated earlier, behavior needs to be seen as part of some bigger picture for it to be thoroughly understood. Those assessing the student and their presenting behaviors must have an orientation from which to form a hypothesis and from which to evaluate the student's behavior. Seeing the behavior in isolation only leads to identifying solutions that may not dramatically affect or alter the student's behavior pattern. Therefore, in this instance *Choice Theory* provides the foundation for understanding the behavior and what it is that the behavior may be attempting to do.

Description of Child's Behavior = Total Behavior System

When describing the child's behavior, "what is the child doing?" the behavior must be seen as a total package and not as a single entity unto itself. Understanding what the student is thinking, how they are feeling (in a physiological sense), and how the child is feeling emotionally adds depth, richness and clarity to the understanding of the actual behavior. The insight gained from this interpretation is invaluable as it begins to provide a clearer understanding as to the child's inner motivation. This understanding is crucial to the development of a hypothesis and ultimately a plan for change.

Precipitating Factors = The External Environment & The Quality World

What is there in the surrounding environment that would cause the child to become out of harmony with their "Quality World Picture"? The child must perceive that something is occurring which is preventing the child from satisfying one or more basic needs. Understanding these precipitating factors require the understanding of the Total Behavior and being able to Identify what needs the child is attempting to satisfy. To thoroughly understand what is out of harmony it is also necessary to understand what the child values or what is included in his/her Quality World. This must be done from the child's perspective and not the adult perspective.

Hypothesis For Explanation = Identifying Which Needs Are Not Being Satisfied.

Understanding which Needs are not being satisfied properly provides the final piece of understanding about the child in an attempt to deal with the behavior. The hypothesis that a given Need is not being satisfied opens the door to action.

Identifying Variables for Change = Developing A Plan

Identifying the variables to change is the final product of understanding the Total Child. Which Needs are not being satisfied as manifested by the Total Behavior of the child becomes the final question before action is taken. Understanding that a Need is not being properly met sets the stage for planning to teach the child different means to satisfying needs. It is quite conceivable that the need for an elaborate

Behavior Intervention Plan, as generally understood, could be eliminated. Assisting a child in fulfilling their needs, appropriately, has the potential for profound and long lasting change.

Conclusion

In this brief paper the correlation between the needs of completing a Functional Assessment of Behavior and the elements Glasser's Choice Theory has been demonstrated. Choice Theory, as described, directly parallels the needs/requirements of a Functional Assessment of Behavior. The actual mechanics of actually completing the FAB utilizing Choice Theory was out of the scope of this paper, and, suffice to say, is a far more complicated matter. The attempt here was to begin to build a foundation from which future work could occur.

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